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New Mexico Environment Secretary Ron Curry to Meet with EPA Administrator, National Environmental Leaders on Wetlands Policy in Washington DC

(Santa Fe, NM) —New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Secretary Ron Curry will travel to Washington DC this week for the National Wetlands Policy Symposium. This meeting will be held **Friday June 25th from 8:30 am to 2 pm at 1255 23rd Street NW, Washington DC.**

Participants in this meeting will include U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Mike Leavitt, Former EPA Administrator William K. Reilly, leaders from the US Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Commerce, and Interior, and environmental regulators from the states of Maryland, Michigan and Florida. Leaders from environmental groups including the Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Federation and National Audubon Society as well as industry leaders representing oil exploration, development, banking and timber interests will also attend.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss national wetlands policy. In this forum one of the issues Secretary Curry plans to discuss is closure of a significant environmental loophole recently opened by the Bush administration.

This loophole, created by a Bush Administration interpretation of the Supreme Court's 2001 *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. United States Army Corps of Engineers et al.* (SWANCC) ruling, could threaten the health of rivers, streams and wetlands in one fifth of New Mexico, including the Mimbres river basin in the west, the Tularosa in the south and the eastern playa lakes.

The Bush Administration's has used its interpretation of the SWANCC ruling to exclude isolated, intrastate, non-navigable waters from environmental protections guaranteed under the federal Clean Water Act.

"Farmers and ranchers rely on this resource as do small communities for their drinking water," said Secretary Curry. "Governor Richardson and NMED have taken strong stands on this issue. We feel that, with drought diminishing our resources, all the state's precious water needs and deserves our protection. I hope that this meeting will be an opportunity to discuss and develop solutions for this pressing water issue."

For further information, contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

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